

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 1080

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT GR

SUBJECT: THE CU/NF DOES - AND DOESN'T - BECOME A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC
PARTY

REF: ATHENS 721

1. THE CENTER UNION/NEW FORCES PARTY HAS - AND HASN'T -
COMPLETED THE TRANSITION TO SOCIAL DEMOCRACY DESCRIBED IN THE
REFTEL. OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS, THE PARTY'S PARLIAMENTARY
GROUP ADOPTED A NEW PROGRAM, DECLARING THE PARTY TO BE A
SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC FORCE; A NEW ORGANIZATIONAL SCHEME, WHICH
PURPORTS TO DEMOCRATIZE ITS OPERATIONS AND DECISION MAKING; AND
A NEW NAME, THE UNION OF THE DEMOCRATIC CENTER (UDC-ENOSI
DIMOKRATICOU KENDROU).

2. THE PROGRAM EMERGED AS THE BLAND AND CONSERVATIVE DOCUMENT
DESCRIBED IN THE REFTEL. THE NEW PARTY STRUCTURE LEAVES
REAL AUTHORITY WITH THE PARTY'S LEADER AND ITS
PARLIAMENTARY GROUP -- WHERE IT HAS ALWAYS LAIN IN GREEK
POLITICAL PARTIES. THEU, THESE TWO ISSUES GENERATED
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LITTLE CONTROVERSY. AS ONE CONSERVATIVE PARLIAMENTARIAN

TOLD US, "NOBODY IS GOING TO READ OR PAY ATTENTION TO OUR PROGRAM--IN GREECE POLITICS ARE STILL BASED ON PERSONALITY."

3. HOWEVER, THE CHANGE IN PARTY NAME NEARLY TORE THE ORGANIZATION APART AND INDICATES HOW SHORT THE PARTY IS OF BECOMING A TRUE "SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC" PARTY. A BROAD COALITION FORMED AMONG THE PARLIAMENTARIANS DETERMINED TO RESIST ANY ATTEMPT TO ATTACH "SOCIALIST" OR "SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC" TO THE PARTY'S NAME. ANGERED AT THE FREE-WHEELING TACTICS OF THE SMALL NEW FORCES GROUP, AND ANXIOUS TO CIRCUMSCRIBE THE INFLUENCE THEY EXERCISE ON PARTY AFFAIRS, A FEW MEMBERS OF THIS GROUP WERE READY TO DRIVE THE NEW FORCES FROM THE PARTY. BUT MOST MERELY WANTED TO GET THEM TO LOWER THEIR VOICES AND THEIR PROFILES. IN ADDITION, MOST DEPUTIES FELT THAT THE WORD SOCIALIST (OR EVEN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC) WOULD DRIVE THE MAJORITY OF THEIR VOTERS INTO THE ARMS OF CARAMANLIS. (MORE THAN A FEW UDC DEPUTIES HAVE TOLD US THEIR CONSTITUENTS MAKE NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN "COMMUNISM" AND "SOCIALISM," BEING STRONGLY OPPOSED TO BOTH.) THE DECISION ON THE ISSUE OF THE PARTY NAME WAS POSTPONED TWICE, AND GENERATED SUCH DIVISIVENESS THAT BEFORE IT WAS FINALLY RESOLVED PARTY LEADER GEORGE MAVROS THREATENED TO RESIGN. IN THE END, THE NEW FORCES WERE CHASTENED AND THE PARTY EMERGED WITH ITS NEW NAME REFLECTING THE WISHES OF THE MAJORITY OF PARLIAMENTARIANS.

4. AN INTERESTING, IF UNINTENTIONAL, INSIGHT INTO GREECE'S GENERATIONAL POLITICS WAS PROVIDED BY THE DECISION TO CHANGE THE NAME OF THE PARTY'S YOUTH GROUP TO GREEK SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC YOUTH (GSDY--ELLINIKI SOCIALISTIKI DEMOCRATIKI NEOLAIA). THE PARTY ELDERS HAVE EVIDENTLY DETERMINED THAT "SOCIALISM" IS DEFINITELY ACCEPTABLE AMONG GREEK YOUTH. THE FACT THAT THE UDC HAS NEARLY NO YOUTH MOVEMENT PERHAPS MADE THIS DECISION LESS THAN CONTROVERSIAL IN PARTY CIRCLES. (DEPUTY ALEXANDER PANGHOULIS--WHO ATTEMPTED TO ASSASSINATE PAPADOPOULOS DURING THE JUNTA PERIOD--WALKED OUT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUP MEETING ON THIS SUBJECT LAST WEEK AND WILL PROBABLY LEAVE THE PARTY. WE ARE TOLD HE WAS ANGERED THAT THE NEW GSDY STATUTES SET 30 YEARS AS THE LIMIT FOR MEMBERS OF THE PARTY'S YOUTH GROUP SO THAT AT THE AGE OF

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37 HE CAN NO LONGER BE A PARTY YOUTH LEADER. PARTY LEADER MAVROS EXPRESSED HIS REGRET TO US OVER THIS DEVELOPMENT BECAUSE, HE SAID, HE CONSIDERS PAHAGHOULIS TO BE AN ABLE DEPUTY WITH A PROMISING POLITICAL FUTURE.)

5. COMMENT: THE PARTY EMERGED RELATIVELY UNITED FROM THE STROGGLE OVER ITS NAME. MAVROS' RESIGNATION THREAT HELPED BRING THIS ABOUT. BUT PARTY UNITY WAS ALSO

SUSTAINED BECAUSE MOST UDC DEPUTIES FEEL THAT THE PARTY HAS A SPECIAL OBLIGATION TO KEEP THE CENTER OF GREEK POLITICS ALIVE TO PREVENT THE KIND OF POLARIZATION ANDREAS PAPANDREOU IS SEEKING AND THAT IN THE PAST HAS PROVEN FATAL TO GREEK DEMOCRACY. (CARAMANLIS SEEMS TO SHARE THIS PERCEPTION. WE UNDERSTAND THAT HE PERSONALLY CALLED MAVROS TO SEEK TO DISSUADE HIM FROM CARRYING OUT HIS THREAT TO RESIGN, A STEP WHICH IF IT HAD BEEN CARRIED OUT ALMOST CERTAINLY WOULD HAVE LED TO THE BREAKUP OF THE PARTY. AN ADDITIONAL FACTOR IN CARAMANLIS' GESTURE WAS ALSO, OF COURSE, THE CORDIAL PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WHICH EXISTS BETWEEN THEM.)

6. THE OUTCOME OF THIS STRUGGLE OVER THE PARTY'S NAME, LIKE THE EARLIER DISCUSSION OVER THE PARTY'S IDEOLOGICAL PRECEPTS, SAW THE UDC'S CONSERVATIVE BASE PREVAIL AGAINST THOSE WHO WOULD LIKE TO HAVE SEEN IT MOVE TOWARDS WHAT THEY CONSIDER A MORE MODERN IDENTITY AND SHAPE, WHICH THEY BELIEVE IS SYNONOMOUS WITH DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM. WITH THEIR ROOTS IN THE PARTY'S CONSERVATIVE, OLDER AND USUALLY RURAL AND SMALL TOWN CONSTITUENCIES, MOST OF THE PARTY'S DEPUTIES ARE UNWILLING TO MOVE RAPIDLY IN THAT DIRECTION. FOR THEIR PART, THE NEW FORCES SEEM TO HAVE TAKEN THEIR DEFEAT PHILOSOPHICALLY; AS ONE OF THE LEADERS TOLD US "WE ARE ONLY AT THE BEGINNING." KUBISCH

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